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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to describe a collaborative university/school based clinical program, and share the implications it has for the development of effective teacher education programs. In 1987, Alan Tom posed a challenge that schools and universities begin to examine the various recommendations brought about and suggested by the Holmes and Carnegie reports. Public schools are being encouraged to collaborate with area businesses, community agencies, and higher education. The activities of these endeavors are diverse and plentiful, but the results are not always measured or share. With these thoughts in mind, two teacher educators chose to examine a way that collaboration between school and university could be successful. They developed a program utilizing teachers, clinical students, and a teacher coordinator. Students spent one semester working with the staff and children, and the bimonthly meetings were held on site using teachers to add to the chosen seminar topic. The overall program was a success from the standpoint that teachers requested to participate again; clinical students rated the experience positively; and the developers are optimistic that they are coming to understand how to collaborate and share expertise and knowledge with one another. (Author/JD)

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University/School Collaboration: Reflections and Results

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Running head: REFLECTIONS AND RESULTS

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Collaboration! Which avenue should the teacher education institution take? Holmes? Carnegie? NCATE? These are challenges that are trying education's soul! Similarly, Alan Tom (1987) stated that educators be "both skeptical and very selective about accepting the recommendations from the various teacher education reform reports" (p.37). He posed the challenge that we examine the proposals and their implications for teacher education.

With these thoughts in mind my colleague and I chose to examine two of the issues facing professional educators. As we looked at the first issue, collaboration and how it is viewed today, we found it being aggressively promoted in and by public schools. Public schools are encouraged to collaborate with area businesses, community agencies and a variety of higher education programs. Schools serve a very small segment of the society and have a limited public, therefore broadened involvement can only strengthen a school's position in the larger community. The activities of collaboration are diverse and plentiful, but results are not always measured or shared.

The second issue revolves around education programs. The performance of practicing teachers is subject to increasing criticism, but the ongoing professional development of these

teachers is typically not approached in any systematic manner. At best, it is sketchy and non-functioning.

Utilizing these issues we developed a collaborative idea that is two-pronged. First, we would use it to afford the teachers, in their capacity as mentors to undergraduate students, an opportunity to be reflective and share their experiences with these students. Secondly, the students would be used to provide the teachers with the latest in research and ideas garnered from the university. Together these elements would provide the groundwork to develop an effective university-school effort.

Using this as our starting point we set out to develop a simple, yet meaningful, collaborative effort. We outlined our framework to involve the following aspects and took into consideration some of the challenges being made.

1. Program Implementation: Where would the program take place? How schedule? Who would be involved?
2. Program goals: What are the objectives that should be accomplished?
3. Program Structure and Content: What areas would be covered? When would seminars take place? Who/how would they be involved?

4. Program Outcome: What were the student comments? Teacher comments? Administration comments? How could this be implemented again?

The university role involved me as clinical coordinator and Methods of Reading instructor for the seven students. My colleague, who is the principal of a middle school in Illinois, chose a teacher liason to coordinate the volunteer teachers of these students and together they discussed the issues they felt important to prospective teachers. We (the principal, teacher coordinator, and I) then looked at the teacher's issues and ones I had ascertained from a large scale survey (Bercik and Blair, 1989), and developed the following agreement:

University/School Program Goals

1. Conferences will be held with each student involving cooperating teacher, principal, and/or Glen Grove teacher coordinator.
2. Schedules will be developed for each student as to times and days present.
3. School expectations will be explained and coordinated with university expectations.
4. Students will participate in the following:
   a. Teaching activities

-individual tutor

-small group lessons

-Large group lessons (culminating activity)

b. Observations

-varying grade levels

-computer programs

-special

-any other school feels important

c. Lesson planning/development

d. Reading development through use of thematic units and literature

5. Seminars will be held at Glen Grove with teacher participation during the last 15-20 minutes. Sessions will involve informal discussion with university instructor, students, and participating school personnel.

6. Students will maintain up-to-date logs for teacher signature.

7. Areas of discussion for the 5 meetings will involve:

a. Discipline/classroom management issues

b. Lesson plan development

c. Reading formation (traditional)

d. Reading formation using thematic units/novels

e. Parental involvement

-grade reporting and conferences

All meetings would be held at the school's Learning Center on alternate Thursdays for one hour.

This agreement was given to the involved students along with the following course requirements:

Clinical Experience Requirements

1. Two lessons taught--one entire class and one small group.
2. Bulletin board to be developed--take picture and present with rationale to instructor.
3. Instructional aid/s developed for classroom use with rationale.
4. Diary of school experiences to be kept and turned in at end of 100 hours.

After explaining the program goals and expectations, students were introduced to their sites, had a brief meeting with the teacher coordinator and their mentor, and finally met with their classes.

The on-site bi-monthly meetings were productive and insightful. As university instructor I set the scene by

discussing the theoretical research aspects of the set topic; the students related it to what they saw, did, or how they felt; and the participating teachers, added the "real world of teaching" aspect.

The meetings held over the ten-week period provided opportunities for the teachers to reflect on their professional life from a personal perspective. They found this to be the most difficult because they had to analyze why and how they had reached certain decisions on discipline, or how they were able to plan and coordinate their day. This coincides with the thoughts of Simmons and Sparks (1988),

> The difficulty we see with current models of clinical supervision and their variations is that they emphasize analyzing teacher and learner behaviors as they occur rather than analyzing the more comprehensive evidence of teacher thinking, the instructional decisions which are made, and their results. We believe that conventional clinical supervision needs to be updated to focus on the inter-connections among the thinking, beliefs, and behaviors involved in the act of teaching. (p.35)

At the program's conclusion students were provided an evaluation form relative to this experience. (See Table 1)

Insert Table 1 about here

The purpose of this was to ascertain students' perceptions of the experience. A Likert scale was employed and the results indicate in all areas--school, experience, and seminar--the experience was positively received. (See Table 2)

Insert Table 2 about here

These experiences were corroborated in the students' daily logs. The consensus by the students was that this experience provided them with a realistic view of teaching. The common theme running through their logs expressed "the fear that I won't know all the answers" to "Gee, it's great to feel like a teacher and part of the team." All of their logs indicate several common themes: weakness in a subject area, lack of classroom management knowledge, and how to decide which papers to grade and record. The one area that managed to unnerve all of them was parent conferences. Depending on the grade, the parent, the student and teacher involved, each clinical student had an opportunity to sit in on a conference. As one clinical

student said "I never realized that a teacher had to be so many persons wrapped into one."

From the school's perspective, this program offered many benefits. The teachers were challenged to evaluate their roles and see how they could pass their expertise on to the novice. The entire school became cognizant of the students' presence and began working to provide a realistic picture of what and how colleagues work together. They became involved in orienting the students to the operations of a school and initiating them into the realm of being a teacher.

Overall the program was a success from our standpoint. Teachers are requesting to participate again; clinical students are getting the message and requesting to participate; and we feel optimistic that we are developing a handle on how to collaborate and share our expertise and knowledge with one another. We feel this intense focus produced the greatest results for improved teacher preparation and provides a vehicle for reflective thinking by professional educators.

References

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Tom, Alan R. (1987). How should teachers be educated? An assessment of three reform reports. Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation.

SCHOOL NAME_____

Directions: On a scale of 1-5 (with 5 being the highest) rate your clinical experiences.

1. _____ The school provided me with a variety of experiences.
2. _____ These experiences will be of use to me when I go into student teaching.
3. My cooperating teacher had me participate in the following activities and I found them to be worthwhile:
   - _____ Class observation
   - _____ Individual tutoring
   - _____ Small group teaching
   - _____ Whole group teaching
4. _____ The overall experience at this school was worthwhile.
5. _____ My cooperating teacher would be an asset to other clinical experience students.
6. _____ My university instructor gave me support during this experience.
7. _____ The seminars were worthwhile and coordinated the overall experience.
8. _____ I think the seminars should be held on a weekly basis.
9. _____ I think the program should remain as it is.

Mean Score of Perceived Experiences at Each Clinical Site

Item	*Mean Score*
1	4.71
2	4.86
3	5.00
4	4.86
5	4.86
6	5.00
7	5.00
8	2.86
9	4.00

Note: Number of students = 7